

Vietnam, China Argue Over Evacuation

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HONG KONG—Vietnam and China are deadlocked in negotiations over terms for a massive sea evacuation of ethnic Chinese from Vietnam, Hanoi announced yesterday.

The dispute, which leaves thousands of Chinese waiting with bags packed near embarkation points, could aggravate the already great friction between the two former Communist partners—yet another blow to an alliance that the United States unsuccessfully battled for more than a decade in Indochina.

With two Chinese evacuation ships reportedly anchored off its coast, Vietnam said it had rejected Chinese demands that they control initial approval of all evacuees and that a three-day time limit on how long a ship can be in port be abolished.

A correspondent for the Japanese news agency Kyodo visiting Haiphong and an Agence France-Presse correspondent in Ho Chi Minh City (formerly Saigon) both said the evacuation may not begin for some time.

Official statements had led evacuees to expect that the Chinese ships would arrive Tuesday at Haiphong and Quinhon as well as the port of Vungtau east of Ho Chi Minh City.

The French correspondent reported that hundreds of people were milling around the downtown dock area Tuesday, apparently unaware of the delay and of the Vietnamese order barring Chinese ships from Ho Chi Minh City. Refugees reaching here have reported that thousands of ethnic Chinese there have already packed their bags for evacuation, but are fearful of being sent off to work on farms before the ships are finally let in.

A statement by the Vietnamese Foreign Ministry called Chinese demands for changes in Hanoi's evacuation rules "preposterous" and "absurd." The statement criticized "the Chinese side's delay in responding to the proposals of the Vietnamese side."

It said China's demand that it certify emigrants before Hanoi issued them exit visas was "completely con-

tary" to 20-year-old procedures. The Chinese demands and the Chinese "refusal to fix a time limit for each Chinese ship docking at Vietnamese ports are designed only to create more difficulties and complexities and prolong the settlement of the question," the statement said.

There was no immediate response from Peking. The Vietnamese statement failed to indicate if China had also objected to other Hanoi conditions such as the three-month time limit on the whole evacuation and the rule that Chinese ships call at Vungtau about 64 miles from Ho Chi Minh City, the home of most ethnic Chinese in Vietnam.

Agence France-Presse, the only Western news agency allowed to cover the evacuation in Ho Chi Minh City, said 30,000 ethnic Chinese in the city had signed up to leave the country in just the five days before the expected Tuesday ship arrival. The agency said Vietnamese authorities had set up several repatriation offices in the city's huge Chinese community of Cholon, but the effort was stymied by the absence of any Chinese officials.

Peking has complained bitterly about Hanoi's failure to act on a two-year-old request for a Chinese consulate in Ho Chi Minh City. The official New China News Agency reported Wednesday that Hanoi had given tentative approval, but then refused to allow Chinese officials to travel from Hanoi to the southern city.

In retaliation, Peking recalled the diplomats it had designated to staff the Ho Chi Minh City mission and ordered Vietnam to close three consulates it has maintained for 20 years in the southern Chinese cities of Kunming, Nanning and Kwangchow (Canton). At the last minute Hanoi reportedly told the Chinese they could open a Ho Chi Minh City consulate after Oct. 1, but that would be too late to assist in the evacuation under the three-month deadline.

The French news agency reported that one Chinese ship, the Minghua, was waiting off Vungtau and another, the Changli, was anchored 37 miles

off Haiphong. The ships left Kwangchow's port after a well-attended farewell ceremony last week. They can only carry about 1,000 to 1,400 passengers each, and would have to be joined by a much larger fleet if China were to evacuate everyone who wants to go during the next three months.

According to Peking, more than 133,000 Chinese have already fled across the Vietnamese border into southern China in the face of apparent widespread economic and social harassment of Chinese who refused to accept Vietnamese citizenship.

Hanoi has tried to nationalize the businesses of thousands of Chinese traders in Ho Chi Minh City. It has also been suspicious of ethnic Chinese loyalty as it has waged war against Cambodian troops equipped by Peking.

The Vietnamese statement complained that it could not persuade representatives of the Chinese Embassy

in Hanoi to begin talks on evacuation procedures until Monday afternoon. Among other things, Peking insisted the evacuees be called "Chinese residents who are victims of ostracism, persecution and expulsion" and that docking time "be determined according to concrete needs," Hanoi's statement said. It said talks were still "going on."

Both sides have traded charges in recent weeks. Hanoi had reported arrests of "provocateurs" with links to the New China News Agency office in Hanoi who were "bullying" Chinese into leaving the country.

Chinese sources here have expressed concern about Hanoi's informal, indirect dealings with the anti-Communist Chinese on Taiwan. Taiwan has granted entry permits to about 1,200 Chinese flown out of Ho Chi Minh City since 1976 in special flights arranged through the Red Cross.